

# **Solano County Juvenile Hall Inspection**

## **2003 – 2004 Grand Jury Report**

### **I. Reason for Investigation**

The California Penal Code §919 (b) mandates that the Grand Jury inquire into the condition and management of public detention facilities within the county.

### **II. Procedure**

The Grand Jury:

- Interviewed Juvenile Hall staff
- Toured Solano County Juvenile Hall
- Spoke with wards in Juvenile Hall

### **III. Background**

1. The Grand Jury met with the Superintendent and Supervising Group Counselors and discussed the current facilities, policies, philosophies and the construction of the new facilities. Following the meeting, the Grand Jury was led on a tour of the facilities, including the receiving area, holding cells, dormitory areas, kitchen, classrooms and exercise yards.

2. Upon detention, juveniles are fingerprinted, photographed and examined by the medical staff. Juveniles are held for a maximum of 72 hours before a detention hearing. The court hearing determines whether the juveniles are to be detained or released to parents/guardians.

3. The facility has 118 beds – 88 beds for detention and 30 beds in a treatment unit. At the time of the visitation there were 60 male and 19 female wards in the hall.

4. The staff-to-ward ratio is 1-10 during the day and 1-30 at night. The average length of detainment is 16.4 days. The cost per day per ward is \$133.00.

5. While the facility is an old building, it appears to be well maintained. The rooms, halls and yards were free of litter. Books and school supplies were all stored in book cases or on desks.

6. Visitation is allowed every Wednesday from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. and Sunday from 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. Visitation is limited to 30 minutes per ward.

7. School attendance is required daily from 8:30 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. Emphasis is placed on improving the reading skills. There are 5 classroom teachers, 1 resource teacher, and 1 reading facilitator.

8. A new Juvenile Hall is under construction on the current site and is scheduled to open in June 2004. The new facility will increase the capacity to 90 beds in the detention unit and 58 beds in the treatment unit. The new facility will include modern cells, classrooms, a larger library, better visitation area and a more accessible entrance for the public.

#### **IV. Findings and Recommendations**

*Each finding is referenced to the background paragraph number.*

**Finding #1** - The ongoing construction has created very poor parking and access to the facility. Inclement weather only exacerbates the problem. (8)

**Recommendation #1** - For future projects, temporary parking and walkways should be planned and placed as close as possible to the entrance.

**Finding #2** - Staff dress code seemed very lax. It was sometimes difficult to identify staff from wards. (1)

**Recommendation #2** - Develop some type of dress code. Senior staff stated that the dress code was currently under negotiation.

**Finding #3** - Ward complaint form dispensers were empty in several areas. (1)

**Recommendation #3** - Keep the dispensers supplied with complaint forms.

**Finding #4** - Supervising staff stated that mental health issues among wards are rapidly increasing. Currently 15-18 wards are on “psychotropic” medication. (2)(3)

**Recommendation #4** - Provide necessary training for staff and designate an area in the new facility to house such wards.

#### **V. Comments**

All staff spoken to expressed enthusiasm for their positions and for the overall atmosphere of the Juvenile Hall.

#### **VI. Affected Agencies**

- Solano County Sheriff/Coroner’s Office
- Solano County Department of Probation
- Solano County Juvenile Hall